TBS 5212B

CBC NEWSLETTER

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VOLUME XXXII WINTER 1986 NUMBER 4

WINTER MEETING AT LITCHFIELD BEACH, SC

The Carolina Bird Club will hold its winter meeting February 6-8, 1987 at Litchfield, SC. The Litchfield Inn has given us group rates for Thursday through Saturday evenings. For reservations use the form in the Newsletter or call 803/448-2516, ask for "reservations" and identify yourself as a member of the Carolina Bird Club. Reservations must be made by JANUARY 30th. Camping is available on a first-come basis at Huntington Beach State Park. You must arrive at the park in the early morning to get a site.

REGISTRATION begins at 3:30 p.m. Friday, February 6 at Litchfield Inn. On Friday night PHIL WILKINSON of the S.C. Wildlife and Marine Resources Department will present an illustrated talk entitled "Colonial Seabirds and Shorebirds of the S.C. Coast." Phil, a long-time native of Georgetown, is one of the authorities on South Carolina's nesting colonial birds, and has more gator stories than anyone else. On Saturday night DR. JAMES PARNELL, CBC member and Professor of Biology at UNC-Wilminton, will make all the life listers drool with his illustrated talk "Birds of the Aleutians."

A wide variety of FIELD TRIPS will be held on Saturday. Details will be presented Friday night, but will include forays to plantations on the Santee Delta for waterfowl and eagles, Bull's Island, and Huntington Beach State Park. Details on SUNDAY FIELD TRIPS will be presented Saturday evening.

CHRIS MARSH has arranged a special early bird FRIDAY FIELD TRIP. John Pryor, who runs the boat to Bull's Island, has agreed to take 15-18 hardy birders through the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge's expansive salt marshes and tidal flats to observe wintering flocks of oystercatchers, godwits, and other water birds. The trip will be approximately five hours long and will cost $25 per person. Chris Marsh will be the group leader. If weather conditions are inhospitable for the boat tour, the group will spend the day on Bull's Island ($12 for boat ride). Registration must be received by JANUARY 30 with full refund if cancellation received by that date. Participants need to bring a bag lunch and warm drink. Trip details provided to registrants. Refund given if less than 15 register.

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REGISTRATION FORM FOR CAPE ROMAIN NWR FIELD TRIP

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State____ Zip____ Telephone # ____/_____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of $_____ for ___ participants at $25 each. Mail to: CHRIS MARSH, Dept. of Biology, USC-Coastal Carolina College, Conway, SC 29526 Tel. 803/236-1799

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SPRING MEETING-CALL FOR PAPERS

Plans are being made for an outstanding CBC 50th anniversary meeting in Raleigh, NC May 1-3, 1987. A paper session will be held on Friday afternoon May 1. Those interested in participating should send a brief abstract of less than one page to Dr. Jeff Walters, Dept. of Zoology, NC State University, Raleigh, NC 27607. Presentaions should require no more than 20-30 minutes.

The Traveling Birdwatcher

TAR HEEL BIRDERS GO WEST

by PAM MCNEIL & SIMON THOMPSON

The fault lies with Mr. Olin Pettingill (with all due respect, of course!). You see, if Mr. Pettingill had not written the tantalizing books on where to find birds east and wast of the Mississippi, then we would never have been able to join the ranks of those who have seen a Yellow Rail. So, I repeat, the fault lies entirely with him.

It's not as if we had gone to Minnesota specifically looking for a Yellow Rail. Actually, the stop was only a bypass on a return trip from South Dakota where we had zealously tracked down Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Common Loons, and other ornithological delights. We had followed Mr. Pettingill from the Missouri prairie in search of Prairie Chickens (successfully!) to the hill of Nebraska for Sharp-tailed Grouse (alas, unsuccessfully). Unable to find the grouse, we were definitely in a foul mood as we were round-abouting our way back to North Carolina, mumbling imprecations upon this certain species as we were flipping throuth the book. . .

"Look, here's a place that mentions finding Yellow Rails!"

"Yellow Rails? You've got to be kidding! Do you know how difficult it is to find a Yellow Rail? I mean, do you have any idea? Where is it?"

"Ohhhh--about ten miles off the beaten track as the crow flies."

"Okay, crow, let's go!"

I must say that this is one area where we definitely excel--snap decisions on where to go to find birds. The Honda was immediately programmed for Maybry Marsh, and we were off!

"What does it shoud like?"

Rapid consultation with Mr. Peterson. "Rather like a clock--you know, tic-tic, tic-tic-tic--"

"Great. A rail that sounds like a clock. Where are the tapes?"

The faithful Panasocic assured us that the elusive bird could only be compared to either a clock or a on-track percussion section. Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic. With that rhythm firmly implanted in our ears, we proceeded to case the marsh area by car, everwhile listening for "tic-tic, tic-tic-tic." The Great Search began about 4:00 p.m., accompanied by very hot and humid weather and occasional rumblings in the black thundercluds to the east. The search was not entirely in vain, having discovered at least a Henslow's Sparrow along the way, but by 6:00 p.m. things were looking a bit on the dim side when--

"Listen!"

Very silen, Then... "Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic."

"That can't be it! It's too soft!"

"Listen, I can smell a rail ten miles away. That's it! That's him!"

"He."

"Shh!"

"Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic." Barely audible.

"Hmmmm..well, let's give it until dusk."

So there we were, the Holmes and Watson of Amateur Ornithology, disguised in a Honda Civic with the formidable tape recorder in hand. A bit of liquid refreshment and watching a Sora Rail sauntering around in front of us on the road helped pass the time until 8:30 p.m. when the sun was beginning to pass over the yardarm. Then, by unanimous conclusion...

"It's time."

We crept stealthily out of our hide and waded into the slightly boggy marsh, Faithful Panasonic in hand, and walked about twenty feet apart in the true rail-finding tradition. For the next thirty minutes the dialogue consisted of such facinating conversation as:

PANASONIC: Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic.

ELUSIVE OBJECT: Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic.

(To our credit, it must be said that only one dilapidated farm truck passed by during this period, so our sanity was not doubted by the local neighborhood at large.)

First it was to the right. Then silence. Then--it was on the left. Infuriating. Frustrating. Where would it stop? Why wouldn't it stop? And what were two nice respectable people like us doing out in the middle of a marsh in God-Knows-Where at 9:00 p.m. at night and we didn't even have a campsite yet and it was getting dark and--

Tic-tic, tic-tic-tic.

TIC-TIC, TIC-TIC-TIC.

Breath held. It hadn't moved.

TIC-TIC, TIC-TIC-TIC.

Louder. Only about fifteen feet away. Careful step forward. Tape recorder. Answer back--"TIC-TIC, TIC-TIC-TIC." Breath still held. Another careful step. He was surrounded--we had him now! Another step... Panasonic...

FLUSH!!!

"THERE HE IS!!!"

What a magnificent sight!

We watched, completely speechless (a rarity) as IT flew up out of the grass and landed again about thirty feet away. That was it, all right--no mistaking that straw color with the white wing patches and dangling legs. We has us a Yellow Rail--at least for a couple of seconds until he descended into possibly the deepest grass around to resume his "tic-tic, tic-tic-tic."

There are moments of exuberant celebration. And then, there are those moments that one is in a mad, mild state of silent shock. We walked back through the marsh to Faithful Honda in a quiet state of exuberant meltdown. Watson and Holmes, Stanley and Livingstone, Laurel and Hardy--none of them could touch us at that moment.

We had found the Yellow Rail!

(Thank you, Mr. Pettingill.)

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LITCHFIELD INN RESERVATION REQUEST
Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting, February 6-8, 1987

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Indicate type accomodations desired. Daily cost per room (double occupancy) shown.

____ Lodge ($30) ____ Two-bedroom Villa w/kitchen-4 persons ($47)

____ Oceanfront ($43) Arrival date _____ Departure date _____

Mail with deposit to LITCHFIELD INN, Drawer 98, Pawleys Island, SC 29585. Tel. 803/448-2516

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CBC WINTER MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s)_____

Address_____ City_____ State____ Zip_____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of $_____ for _____ member registrations at $4 each and ____ nonmember registrations at $5 each.

Mail to CAROLINA BIRD CLUB, INC., PO Box 27647, Raleigh, NC 27611

Welcome New Members

GENE BLACKLOCK
Corpus Christi, TX

MARGARET L. COBB
Winston-Salem, NC

PEGGY FEREBEE
Summerfield, NC

JULIE FINLAYSON
Conway, SC

ANN S. GROSS
West Columbia, SC

THOMAS C. HANKINS
West Columbia, SC

DIANE W. HOLSINGER
Timberville, VA

BARBARA KEEFE
Mt. Pleasant, SC

BROOKE MEANLEY
Fisherville, VA

FLORENCE ROBERS
Brevard, NC

FRANCES ROBIN SIBLEY
Franklin, NC

TRACY WARREN THROP
Raleigh, NC

M/M PARIS TRAIL
Edenton, NC

JOSEPH K. VAUGHAN
Durham, NC

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

CBC President John Watson has appointed the following nominating committee: GEORGE MCCOY, Columbia, SC (Chairman); JEAN HOUGH, Pisgah Forest, NC; PHILLIP CRUTCHFIELD, Fayetteville, NC. Officers to be elected: President*, Vice-President ENC, Secretary, Treasurer, Member-at-Large ENC*. Member-at-Large WNC, Member-at-Large SC, Member-at-Large SC*(1 yr term). * indicates that incumbent is not eligible for reelection. If you have suggestions for nominees, please pass them on to a member of the committee.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 3rd Southeastern Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Symposium will be held Sept. 8-10, 1987 in Athens, GA. Information: Ron Odom, Georgia DNR, Game & Fish Divsion, Social Circle, GA 30279.

The 6th National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association Symposium will be held March 18-22, 1987 in Clearwater Beach, FL. Information: Symposium Information, Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, 18328 Gulf Boulevard, Indian Shores, FL 33535.

NECROLOGY

The Carolina Bird Club notes with regret the death of the following members:

Dr. ROLETTA O. JOLLY-FRITZ
Tampa, FL

JANICE T. LEE
Raleigh, NC

GENEVIEVE WASHBURN (life)
Tryon, NC

LOBBYING REQUEST

North Carolina CBC members who are interested in the construction of a new Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh should encourage their representatives in the General Assembly to vote for funding in the 1987 session.

PIPING PLOVER SURVEY

Please report any Piping Plover sightings from October to March(date, location, color band) to Janice Nichols, Dept. of Zoology/Wildlife, 331 Funchess Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-4201.

CBC NEWSLETTER is published quarterly by Carolina Bird Club, Inc., the ornithological society of the Carolinas, with headquarters at Raleigh, N. C. CBC is a nonprofit corporation, founded in 1937, with membership open to anyone interested in birds, natural history and conservation.

Members are encouraged to submit items of interest to CBC Newsletter, Clyde Smith, Editor, 2615 Wells Ave., Raleigh, NC 27608.

CAROLINA BIRD CLUB Inc
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